

# Force *Projection* Demands Force *Protection*

By SGM Charlie Mahone

Leaders can't project a force into the fight if that unit isn't well. The Army's warfighting doctrine, FM 100-5, **Army Operations**—and other supporting doctrine such as FMs 25-100, 25-101 and 101-5—is the authority that describes how America's Army fights wars and conducts operations other than war (OOTW). It also dictates that force protection (our new safety philosophy) must be integrated during planning, execution and the assessment phase of all operations and exercises.

Resources and force disposition contribute to doctrine development. In an army faced with continuing decreases in forward-deployed units, doctrine alone can't assume that forces are in place when a conflict begins. Nor should we assume that unit equipment and soldiers are always ready. We must ENSURE that equipment and soldiers left in our charge are READY to deploy anywhere in the world on short notice.

This is where Force Protection becomes key in the enhancement of warfighting and our ability to project our forces. Commanders must have confidence in their NCOs at all levels, and in their safety program. After all, one accident could mean losing one or several deployable soldiers and pieces of equipment.

A spirit of shared responsibility and authority goes a long way within any unit's safety program. Shared responsibility and authority between officers and

NCOs doubles the exposure to safety. Putting NCOs out front as standard bearers on and off duty, helping during safety surveys and assisting on investigations provides a focal point for the entire unit. This shared act allows for NCOs to serve as liaisons between the military and some local community assets.

One of the worst things commanders, leaders or supervisors can do is appoint a safety NCO and then not use that NCO to protect their force. Unit safety NCOs serve as a key asset for commanders and should be used to accomplish that unit's force protection mission. Safety NCOs accomplish their duty by detecting problems or hazards early and making recommendations, keeping the command updated on program effectiveness. They also serve to motivate and promote soldier awareness in accident prevention while fostering two-way communication on safety issues.

As NCOs, we are paid to put forth a valiant effort to prevent accidents and assist in developing programs to reduce them. All NCOES courses teach some

form of force protection as do the First Sergeant and Battle Staff Courses. NCOs are exposed to force protection and ways to implement this concept throughout their military career. That means every NCO serves, to some degree, as a safety NCO. Section chiefs, platoon sergeants, first sergeants, and sergeants major are ideal safety NCOs because they have hourly and/or daily contact with their soldiers.

This doesn't mean that the safety NCO's duties are diminished or no longer required. NCOs in America's Army are routinely involved in the risk management process, developing a good command climate, serving as a safety council member and being the eyes and ears of the command.

Protecting our force means we're battle focused with the ability to take soldiers and equipment to the fight and win the battle, then return home intact as we deployed. ■

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